Nuclear power is not only unnecessary, it is among the costliest and potentially the most dangerous ways to produce electricity - which is why investors demand loan guarantees and taxpayer subsidized liability insurance, rather than risk their own dollars building new nuclear plants. Nonetheless, just five days after the Fukushima disaster in Japan, U.S. Energy Secretary Steven Chu, was testifying before Congress wanting to build more nukes. In fact, Pres. Obama is proposing $36 billion to entice private industry to build the plants while cutting billions from renewable energy alternatives. This $36 billion in fresh loans is over and above the $18.5 billion already approved under the Bush administration. Apparently, the nuclear lobby enjoys bipartisan support.

The World Wildlife Fund and Greenpeace International have done authoritative studies that show the U.S. and the world could shed dependency upon fossil fuels and nuclear power and shift to real green energy by 2050 if governments chose to do so. But can we, and the governments who supposedly represent us, rise above self-interest and profit and bureaucratic inertia to stop global climate change and serve the better interest of society as a whole?

Putting corporate interests first meant putting our own dollars building new nuclear plants. Nonetheless, just five days after the Fukushima disaster in Japan, U.S. Energy Secretary Steven Chu, was testifying before Congress wanting to build more nukes. In fact, Pres. Obama is proposing $36 billion to entice private industry to build the plants while cutting billions from renewable energy alternatives. This $36 billion in fresh loans is over and above the $18.5 billion already approved under the Bush administration. Apparently, the nuclear lobby enjoys bipartisan support.

Corporate proponents of more nuclear plants in the U.S. claim their safety is assured because they are designed to withstand earthquakes of the highest magnitude. The Fukushima reactors were also built based upon this principle, but they did not plan for or understand the unpredictable events that could trigger a meltdown. With global climate change, we are experiencing natural disasters of greater intensity and frequency - floods, hurricanes, droughts, tornadoes - that were previously thought impossible. And, as shown by the BP Gulf Oil spill fiasco, corporate domination of decision making does not add human error, sabotage, safety violations, and greed into the equation.

No doubt General Electric's cost cutting Mark 1 Reactor design had a role in the Fukushima disaster, which is why the GE engineers were right to resign in protest 35 years ago when their safety concerns were overruled by GE executives. Incidentally, GE managed to pay no taxes to the U.S government this year.

Here in Wisconsin there is also a renewed push to expand nuclear power plants, while failing to seriously pursue other greener alternatives. Worse yet, as spent fuel rods pile up at existing reactors on the shores of Lake Michigan and on islands in the Mississippi River, eyes are shifting to Wisconsin as a potential host for a national high level radioactive waste dumpsite. One can only imagine the inherent dangers with transporting such waste by truck, ship, and train across the continent to our North Woods for burial forever.

In 2008 the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science, and Technology for Development (IAASTD), sponsored by the World Bank and five U.N. agencies, issued its long awaited study. The study’s conclusion was that a transformation of the world’s food and farm system towards smallscale sustainable agriculture.

According to the 400 scientists and development experts from more than 80 countries involved in the study, this is the only way to cool the planet and feed the world, and the IAASTD’s finding has already been endorsed by 58 countries. These small family farms work with nature and require far less fossil fuel and electricity demand - in contrast to industrial agriculture which is responsible for 25% of all U.S. greenhouse gas emissions.

Concerned citizens need to contact their elected officials at both the state and federal level to oppose these misguided proposals to build more nukes. The U.S. should be following the example of Germany - where 2% of all electricity now comes from solar - and imposing an immediate moratorium on new reactors pending a comprehensive safety review of existing ones. Better yet, there are the examples of other nations - like Australia, Denmark, and Malaysia - that have refused to go down the nuclear road at all.

Renewable green energy could easily fulfill all our electricity needs and make dangerous unsustainable options like nuclear obsolete.

No More Nukes!

BY JOHN KINSMAN

P roducers Federation’s (NMPF’s) “Foundation for the Future” (FFFT) nears completion as legislation and its benefits are widely being touted, Pennsylvania Family Farm Defenders (PA FFD) is concerned that there are serious reasons to believe that the alleged benefits of FFFT are vastly overstated.

Food and Agricultural Policy Research Institute (FAPRI), University of Missouri, did an analysis of NMPF’s FFFT program soon after the plan was released in June of 2010. FAPRI projected that the average price of milk paid to dairy farmers would be no higher under NMPF’s program, than if nothing were to be done at all, perhaps even slightly lower.

‘Margin insurance’ is a key part of the FFFT. Under FFFT, the government, which everyone knows means ‘taxpayers’, would provide a base level of ‘margin insurance’. According to NMPF’s own graphs, only about nine months in the last 10 years would have triggered payment in the base program. Any additional insurance would have to be purchased by the already financially strapped dairy farmer above the base level by the Federal Government. Essentially farmers would be paying for ‘margin insurance’ even though the average price of milk will not likely increase.

Lenders may insist that farmers purchase this “margin insurance”, in order to obtain financing. Small farms which were eligible for Milk Income Loss Contract (MILC) program payments on their full production will almost certainly come up short under NMPF’s program if, as expected, the MILC program which made direct payments to dairy farmers when milk prices dropped below a certain level, is eliminated and replaced by the “margin insurance” program.

“Competitive Pricing” when there is little competition in the market place, is not likely to increase farm milk price since the survey will show what processors think milk should be worth.

For milk pricing information based on cost of production please visit www.copiday.com. There you will find a background for cost of production and other useful information that highlights the serious challenges facing America’s dairy farmers and consumers, plus an analysis of NMPF’s Foundation for the Future. It is time that farmers get informed on what is being done on their behalf.

The PA FFD can be reached at pennafjd@gmail.com.